

# Eifel Times

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Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany

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## Squadron deploys to Turkey to use range

**By Capt. Dani Johnson**  
**39th Wing public affairs**

Air Force F-16s from Spangdahlem Air Base deployed to Turkey May 6 to spend two weeks dropping training weapons on the Konya Range.

This weapons training deployment of eight F-16CJs and more than 120 airmen from the 23rd Fighter Squadron allows them to practice air-to-surface and air-to-air training.

"It's really hard for us to get ranges in Germany, the weather is really bad," said Lt. Col. Rick Reynolds, 23rd FS commander. "The ranges are a long way away so we don't often get a chance to drop bombs. This gives us a chance to hone our skills."

Unit pilots fly each weekday, twice in the morning and twice in the afternoon. During this time, the pilots get a chance to pick numerous targets at Konya Range, about 200 nautical miles from Incirlik AB.



Senior Airman Neal Joiner

Maj. Sonny Blinkinsop, 23rd Fighter Squadron pilot, with help from two crew chiefs prepares to launch his F-16CJ from Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, as part of a weapons training deployment.

The range has more than 40 targets from which the pilots can choose. A range control officer grades each bombing run. The pilot picks the target, radios the controller and the controller grades each pilot on the accuracy of the drop, explained 1st Lt. Andrew Wiles, 23rd FS.

"Most of the time we are struggling to fill our bomb squares," Reynolds said. "We're required to drop so many bombs per year."

Four people work at the range during the weapons training deployment, a range control officer from the 23rd FS and three people from the 39th Operations Support Squadron from Aviano Air Base, Turkey, who score the drops.

"As an RCO, I ensure safe operations and act as a coordination node between all the agencies," said Capt. Rob Petty, 23rd FS pilot and WTD range control

officer for week one. "Basically, I clear the pilots onto the range and clear them hot into the target area. I also look out for safety of ground personnel as well as (what's taking place) in the air."

The unit conducts high altitude bombing at different dive angles as well as low altitude bomb drops. The squadron also practices strafing — employing the aircraft gun to hit a target. Each bomb drop and strafe are carefully graded. The grade is then radioed to the pilot.

"I call the bomb scores out to the pilot. The only way for a pilot to get better is to see how their first bomb dropped," Petty said. "This way they can adjust in the air and concentrate on safety."

The primary mission of

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Staff Sgt. Laura Sparks

### Lighting the way

An StBA contractor shows Col. Alan Thompson, 52nd Fighter Wing vice commander, the location of taxi-track lights on a map. The final inspection on the more than \$22 million dollar taxi-track pavement and lighting project took place at 10 a.m. May 10, after almost three years of construction. The project called for replacing deteriorated taxiway pavement,

drainage and lighting. It included removing asphalt and concrete, stabilizing the base course and subgrade, installing new asphalt and concrete surface, installing new drainage and gutters, as well as cable and lighting along the ramp taxiways. The work had to be done in six phases and around various short-notice military requirements.

# FTD lives by its motto, 'World is Our Classroom'

Det. trains hands-on  
in global setting

**By Chief Master Sgt.  
John Gabaldon**  
Central Europe Field  
Training chief

Spangdahlem's Field Training Detachment 17 spans central Europe to live up to its motto, "The World is Our Classroom."

The unit provides more than 18,330 hours of hands-on instruction to 1,507 host and temporary duty students each year in 271 courses. At times, Det. 17 sends its instructors as far away as Alaska.

Detachment instructors provide maintenance training for the F-16, F-15, A-10 and C-130 aircraft weapons systems as well as munitions, electronic warfare, circuit card repair and aerospace ground equipment. Comprised of 32 people in 15 maintenance career fields, the unit operates out of three separate locations at Spangdahlem Air Base, Ramstein AB and Aviano AB, Italy.

Countless years of experience back up their goal of providing the best training available.

"Field training has been here since the beginning of the Air Force," said Col. Daniel Lombardi, 52nd Logistics Group commander. "Now, more than ever, training is



Courtesy photo

Staff Sgt. Henry Robles, Field Training Detachment 17 instructor, provides hands-on training to 52nd Component Repair Squadron members Staff Sgt. George Knight, and Airmen 1st Class Scott Hoke and Brian Atwood.

paramount with our dwindling resources and recruiting woes. If we're not in combat, our job is to train.

"FTD provides that stable environment where we can get the folks away from the work centers and flightline to conduct mission-critical training in a controlled environment."

It's those challenges that made the troops at Det. 17 develop their capabilities in three types of training to meet the needs of an ever-changing Air Force.

## Formal training

With a standardized curriculum at all locations with the same weapons systems regardless of the major command, formal training courses award graduates Air Force Forms 1256, "Certificate of Training." This is the strength of FTD.

Formal courses are requested through unit training managers and coordinated with the logistics training flight to obtain FTD support. These courses also are accredited by the Community College of the Air Force.

## Partial courses

Because of increasing operations tempo and the different needs of work centers, FTD offers the option of partial courses. In these, instructors teach maintainers one or more objective from a formal course and sign students off on a certificate of training.

Students take the certificate back to their unit training manager to document the training on their Air Force training records. This allows graduates to learn specifically what

supervisors identify as necessary while returning maintainers to the work center quickly.

## Training sessions

Training sessions are used for short-term training needs. This is a tool for supervisors who identify training deficiencies in maintainers or notice a negative trend in quality of work and don't require a formal course. FTD instructors are able to provide this type of training with minimal lead time.

"FTD has some of the best maintainers in the Air Force," said Capt. Kirsten Palmer, Det. 17 commander. "They're highly qualified as instructors and are hand-picked because of their outstanding troubleshooting skills and experience."

"When there's an aircraft malfunction that has eluded other maintainers, we're often called out to assist in troubleshooting. We were also a key contributor to the success of Operation Allied Force. We deployed and assisted in launch and recovery of mission-critical flights."

With a tradition of providing top-notch instruction since 1942, FTD instructors continue to be an asset today in making combat units more effective tomorrow.

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the F-16CJ is suppression of enemy air defenses. SEAD is accomplished by destroying or disrupting surface-to-air missile systems, anti-aircraft artillery systems and other parts of integrated air defense systems.

"Bombing is our secondary mission," Reynolds said. "We still

have requirements though and that's why we are here."

"We've lucked out this year by having two WTDs," said Capt. Philip Malebranche, a 23rd FS pilot. His squadron spent two weeks during April in Slovakia, where a bombing range just opened for U.S. Air Force

use.

"Slovakia opened up another opportunity," Reynolds said. "The advantage at Slovakia is the range is closer and we can drop more bombs. The advantage here is the range and the weather are both good."